

Marine Alien Species and the Samoan Archipelago: Issues and Management

Sponsored By: American Samoa Dept of Marine and Wildlife Resources, American Samoa Department of Commerce and Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary Program

A workshop discussing the topic of marine alien species in the Samoan Archipelago took place March 18 and 19 at the Convention Center in Utulei. Workshop topics included a review of marine alien species present in the tropical Pacific and the Samoan Archipelago. This included coverage of the ways species are accidentally and intentionally transported to the Samoan Archipelago and strategies for management. A broad range of individuals from local and regional agencies responsible for protecting and conserving marine resources participated.

A total of 28 marine alien and cryptogenic species have been recorded as established in American Samoa. This number is made up of 26 marine invertebrates and 2 marine algae species. To date, 22 marine alien and cryptogenic species have been recorded from Samoa. The species recorded as established in Samoa are made up of 19 marine invertebrates and 3 species of marine algae. It has been determined that the majority of marine alien species within the Samoan Archipelago were introduced accidentally through maritime vessel vectors or intentionally as aquaculture organisms for fisheries enhancement. Of the alien species established in both American Samoa and Samoa there are roughly 5 species recorded that both have in common. For information on American Samoa surveys contact Scott Godwin, Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, lgodwin@hawaii.edu; for Samoa survey information contact Posa Skelton, International Ocean Institute, skeltonp@bigpond.net.au

An introduction to the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) was given to workshop attendees. The PILN was established to coordinate regional programs in Pacific Island Countries and Territories focused on awareness of the alien species problem. This organization, which is based in Apia, Samoa at the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP), deals with both terrestrial and aquatic alien species. For more information contact Jill Key, Pacific Invasives Learning Network, Jillk@sprep.org

The trans-boundary nature of maritime shipping and the connectivity of the oceans dictate that no one port or country can effectively control the spread of marine alien species. This is especially true in the region in which the Samoan Archipelago is associated. In order to be effective, the island nations in the region must work cooperatively with both their neighbors and the broader global community to implement and sustain measures to protect their marine resources.

The members of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) have responded to the threat posed by marine alien species, by developing a *Regional Strategy on Shipping-Related Introduced Marine Pests in the Pacific Islands* (SRIMP-PAC). Development of the Strategy is an activity under SPREP's Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Program (PACPOL), and is funded by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). It aims to assist Pacific Island Countries and Territories to protect their marine environments from shipping related marine bio-invasions. The two key vectors that are being targeted are ships' ballast water and vessel fouling, with particular emphasis on cruising yachts, that visit the region in significant numbers. The SRIMP-PAC Strategy is based on the 'layered defense' approach, with management arrangements organized along established world's best practice in the fields of bio-security and quarantine, as follows: pre-border (incursion prevention), at-border (incursion interdiction) and post-border (incursion response, control and mitigation). For more information contact Anthony Talouli, SPREP, Marine Pollution Officer, anthonyt@sprep.org

Participants in the workshop voiced a common opinion that marine alien species should be included as one of a group of important issues for marine resource conservation in the Samoan Archipelago. In 2007, the Governor of American Samoa and the Prime Minister of Samoa made an agreement to begin coordinating efforts between the two Samoa's on laws and efforts that focus on conservation. Also it was agreed that the two Samoa's begin sharing information on the issues that confront each country for resource management. This agreement has inspired a workshop beginning April 28, 2008 in Pago Pago that will bring together working level managers and individuals from regional conservation organizations from American Samoa and Samoa to discuss issue pertaining to natural resource matters. The topic of marine alien species will be discussed alongside other important threats to the natural resources of the Samoan Archipelago. For more information contact Gene Brighthouse at American Samoa Dept of Commerce, gene.brighthouse@noaa.gov.

The marine alien species workshop was conducted to provide core information for administrators, working level managers and educators concerning marine alien species. A general theme that ran through the workshop was that the goal should be cooperation across the Samoan Archipelago to minimize the transport of marine aliens from overseas and interisland. Additionally, this goal could be better achieved through education and outreach to the general public and resource managers concerning marine alien species established in the Samoan Archipelago, transport mechanisms, and the international and local regulations available to policy-makers.